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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 000564

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ISRAELI EMBASSY FOCUSED ON ARAB-SOUTH AMERICAN SUMMIT

REF: A. BRASILIA 432

[1](#)B. STATE 35934

Classified By: Political Counselor Dennis Hearne, Reasons 1.4 (b & d)

[1](#)1. (C) In March 1 discussion with Poloff, Embassy of Israel Minister Counselor Eitan Surkis reiterated the GOI'S concerns with Summit preparations and Brazil's Summit-related diplomacy to date. Although the Embassy had already met with the head of the Ministry of External Relations' (MRE) Middle East Division to discuss Summit issues, Surkis liked the U.S. approach and wanted to meet with MRE's lead on Summit preparations negotiations Ernesto Rubarth. (Rubarth is Special Assistant to MRE Political Under-Secretary Vera Pedrosa who is in overall charge of Summit issues.) A complicating factor, Surkis acknowledged, was Vera Pedrosa's lame duck status as Under-Secretary which could make her even more reluctant than normal to be forthcoming with the Israelis.

[1](#)2. (C) Surkis affirmed that the GOI had approached MRE with an invitation for Foreign Minister Amorim to stop in Jerusalem during his February Middle East trip. The MRE response, he noted, was that there was no time on the FM's schedule which, in any case, was focused entirely on Summit preparations. However, MRE said nothing about a FM visit to the Palestinian Authority, a stopover not announced earlier. When the Embassy discovered in a MRE press release that Amorim was to visit Ramallah and then reiterated its own invitation, the Ministry restated the time constraints on the FM, noting Amorim would only be in Ramallah a few hours. In reality, Amorim spent almost 24 hours in Ramallah. Surkis also noted last minute, unnecessary hassles at the Allenby Bridge caused by Brazilian failure to be forthcoming with the GOI.

[1](#)3. (C) Perhaps due to the fallout from Amorim's perceived snub of Israel hitting a "raw nerve", Surkis felt, the GOB had gotten the message. (Even Brazilian media pundits had taken note of the Foreign Minister's failure to demonstrate diplomatic even-handedness by not visiting Israel.) He surmised that in order to counter the negative image it had created for itself with the U.S., Israel, and others, the Ministry arranged for President Lula to meet next week with visiting Deputy Prime Minister Olfert. (Foreign Minister Amorim will be traveling in Africa and unavailable for Olfert.) In addition, the MRE repeated to the Embassy that the FM still intended to visit Israel in June/July -- a visit, Surkis sarcastically noted, that remained very much in doubt.

[1](#)4. (C) Regarding the last week's Summit preparation meetings in Cairo, Israel understood that progress had been made on economic and social aspects of the draft declaration; however, the impasse between Arabs and Latins on political issues remained. Surkis understood that no new text had emerged from the talks. The next step will be a meeting in Brasilia for Brazil and Argentina (representing the South Americans) to brief the other South American countries. A similar Arab League meeting is also expected.

[1](#)5. (C) Finally, Surkis took note that the GOB still was "furious" over the leaked draft declaration and the Oppenheimer article in the Miami Herald. Smiling wryly, he observed that perhaps the leak had "served its purpose".

[1](#)6. (C) Comment: Surkis' comments track closely with our own understanding of the situation. The MRE, we believe, underestimated the sensitivities aroused by its somewhat ham-handed diplomacy, yet are unwilling to acknowledge that the Summit and Amorim's ill-conceived visit to the region could undermine the Middle East peace process at a delicate and promising moment. Ambassador will deliver ref B points to MRE Secretary-General Samuel Guimaraes March 2 and will meet with the President of B'nai Brith of Brazil on March 4.

Danilovich